



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **HAMTRAMCK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO OPERATING AN UNLICENSED MONEY TRANSMITTING BUSINESS** *Illegally transmitted \$3million in funds to Bangladesh*

DETROIT — A Hamtramck man pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court here Friday for operating an unlicensed money-service business, announced Special Agent-in-Charge Brian M. Moskowitz from the Detroit office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Mohammed Islam Uddin, 39, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Bangladesh, operated Ibrahim Money Exchange, which was responsible for transmitting about \$3 million to Bangladesh with little or no documentation about the senders or recipients of the money transfers.

ICE executed a search warrant and apprehended Uddin at his residence in March 2003. Evidence seized indicated that Uddin was preparing to depart the U.S. to Bangladesh. Additional documentary evidence showed a pattern of unusual banking activity using seven bank accounts in support of a money-service business.

Uddin operated a trade-based scheme to facilitate his illegal money-service business where telephone calling cards were purchased on behalf of a pre-paid phone card merchant in Bangladesh. The merchant served as Uddin's distribution agent for Ibrahim Money Exchange. Uddin would purchase the cards with U.S. currency from a legitimate and unwitting U.S. communications corporation on behalf of the Bangladeshi merchant. The merchant would generate sales in local currency (takas) from the sale of the phone cards.

The ICE investigation uncovered that once the merchant received the takas, he would then distribute the funds to the ultimate recipients in Bangladesh on behalf of Ibrahim Money Exchange. Uddin would avoid paying the fees to convert U.S. dollars to takas, and evade conducting international wire transfers.

“The ‘paper trail’ is the cornerstone of law enforcement’s ability to prevent, detect and thwart financial crimes,” said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Detroit Office of Investigations. “Unscrupulous and greedy operators of unlicensed money transmitting businesses chip away at that cornerstone and make it easier for illicit funds to move around the world where they may be used to support criminal organizations and other dangerous activities.”

Operation Cornerstone is an ongoing ICE initiative that targets the means by which criminal organizations earn, move and store illicit proceeds. ICE’s goal is to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations and to eliminate systemic vulnerabilities before these organizations can exploit them for their own purposes.

Uddin is scheduled for sentencing April 17.

Jim Klawitter of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Michigan, prosecuted the case.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*